

LITTLE COMRADE

The Adventures of a New York Man
and a Woman Spy in the Present War

By BURTON E. STEVENSON

CHAPTER I.

The Thirty-first of July.

ET us have coffee on the terrace," Bloom said. "As his companion nodded, he lifted a finger to the waiter and gave the order."

Both men were a little sad, for this was their last meal together, and though they had known each other less than a fortnight, they had become fast friends. They had been together by chance at the surgical congress at Vienna, where Bloom, finding the American's German name and having, had constituted himself a sort of interpreter and Stewart had reciprocated by pointing away some of the roughnesses and Teutonic invocations of Bloom's formal English.

When the congress ended, they had journeyed back together in leisurely fashion through Germany to Cologne. Here they were to part, Bloom to return to his work at Elberfeld, Stewart for a week or two in Brussels and Paris on his way home to America.

Bloom's train was to leave in an hour, and it was the consciousness of this that kept them silent until their waiter came to tell them that their coffee was served. As they followed him through the hall a tall man in the uniform of a Captain of Infantry led real and at the date, then read entered from the street. His eyes the rather vague description of its brightness as he caught sight of Bloom.

"Ach, Herrman!" he cried. "Please sign your name here," he said, and indicated a blank page. Bloom, turning, stopped an instant for a burlesque salute, then threw himself into the other's arms. A moment later he was dragging him forward to introduce him to Stewart.

"My cousin," he cried, "Herrman is a great fire eater! Cousin, this is my friend, Dr. Bradford Stewart, whom I had the good fortune to meet at Vienna. I am pleased to meet you, sir," said the Captain, shaking hands and speaking excellent English.

"You must join us," Bloom interposed. "We are just going to have good food on the terrace. Come with us."

He caught the other by the arm, but the Captain shook his head. "I really cannot, much as I should like to do so," Dr. Stewart, he added, "I think hesitatingly, 'I trust you will not think me discourteous if I take my cousin aside for a moment.'"

"Certainly not," Stewart assured him. "I will join you on the terrace," said Bloom.

A few moments later Bloom returned to Stewart.

"There is very bad news, my friend," he said, almost in a whisper. "There is going to be a war!"

Stewart stared for an instant, astonished at the gravity of his tone. Then he nodded comprehendingly.

"Yes," he said, "I had not thought of it, but I suppose a war between Austria and Serbia will affect Germany somewhat. Only I am hoping the powers would interfere and stop it."

"It seems it cannot be stopped," said Bloom gloomily. "Russia is mobilizing to assist Serbia. Austria is Germany's ally, and so Germany must come to her aid, and she will declare war on her mobilizing. Our army has already been called to the colors."

Stewart breathed a little deeper. "But perhaps Russia will desert when she realizes her danger," he suggested. "She must know she is no match for Germany."

"She does know," Bloom agreed. "But she will not fight alone. It is not against Russia we are mobilizing; it is against France."

"Against France?" echoed the other. "But surely!"

"Do not speak so loud, I beg of you," Bloom cautioned. "What I am saying is not generally known. The dreadful thing about this war is that it will not happen after all, but France is Russia's ally—she will be eager for war—for forty years she has been preparing for this moment."

"Yes," said Stewart, smiling. "I have heard of 'la revanche.' I have seen the mourning wreaths on the Strasburg monument."

Suddenly, in the corner, three mounted officers appeared; then a line of soldiers wheeled into view; then another and another and another, moving as one man. The head of the column crossed the square, passed behind the church, and disappeared; but still the tide poured on, with slow and regular undulation, dim, mysterious and threatening. At last the rear of the column came into view, passed, disappeared; the clatter of iron on stone softened to a shuffle, to a murmur, died.

With a long breath Bloom sat across and passed his handkerchief across his shining forehead.

"There is a fatal situation," he said. "The unit composed of a thousand lesser units—each unit a man with a soul like yours and mine; with hopes and ambitions, with a right to live, with a right to march to death, perhaps, in the ranks yonder. There are four million such units in the army the Emperor can call into the field. I am one of them—I shall march like the rest."

"You?"

"Yes, I am a private in the Ninety-eighth," Bloom said, with a little shake of the head. "I am a corporal," he added, "but my discipline was faulty and I was reduced to the ranks."

Stewart also stared at those beautiful hands, so expressive, so expert. How vividly they typified the waste of war!

"Goodby—and good luck!" Stewart wrung the hand thrust into his. "You have been most kind to me."

Bloom answered with a little smile. "I am left home. All my American friends laughed at me and told me I was wasting a dollar."

"I should like to see it."

"Have you a passport?"

"Yes, I was foolish enough to get one before."

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A Gold Brick Revival

By Robert Minor



that all they possessed, even to their lives and the lives of their loved ones, belonged to their fatherland, to be yielded ungrudgingly when the need arose. It was for each of them to go quietly about his affairs, to obey his demand, and that it is our duty to keep watch over all strangers, as much for their own protection as for any other reason."

CHAPTER II.
The First Rumblings.

WHEN Stewart asked for his bill the hotel proprietor, instead of entrusting it, as usual, to the head waiter, presented it in person.

"If Herr Stewart would pay in gold it would be a great favor," he said.

Like all Americans, being unaccustomed to gold and finding its weight burdensome, Stewart carried banknotes whenever it was possible to do so. Emptying his pockets now he found, besides a miscellaneous lot of silver and nickel, a single small gold coin, value ten marks.

"But I have plenty of paper," he said. Producing his pocketbook, he spread five notes for a hundred marks each before him on the table. "What's the matter with this?"

"There is nothing at all the matter with it, sir," the little German hastened to explain. "Only, just at present, there is a preference for gold. I would advise that you get gold in exchange for these notes, if possible."

"I have a Cook's letter of credit," said Stewart. "They would give me gold. Where is Cook's office here?"

"It is but a step up the street, sir," answered the other, eagerly. "Come, I will show you."

The cashier at Cook's looked rather dubious when Stewart laid the banknotes down and asked for gold.

"I am sorry, sir," the cashier assured him, "but some of the tradespeople, who are always suspicious and ready to take alarm, are demanding gold. How long will you be in Germany?"

"I go to Belgium to-night or tomorrow."

"Then you can use French gold," said the cashier with a scrupulously clean. As he made his toilet Stewart reflected how much more of comfort, and how much warmer a welcome, might often be found at the small inn than at the big ones, and mentally thanked the officer of police who had recommended this.

Asking directions of his landlady, he set out on a stroll to the Cathedral. The quiet of the vast church was grateful after the day's noise and excitement.

As he came out into the streets again it seemed to him that they were emptier than ever. Nearly all the shops were closed; there was no vehicular or foot traffic; there were scarcely any people. And then, as he turned the corner into the great square in front of the town hall, he saw where the people were, for a great crowd of women and children and old men—while from the steps before the entrance an official in gold-laced uniform and cocked hat was delivering a harangue.

Then the speaker read the Kaiser's address, and reminded his hearers

CHAPTER III.
The Mystery of the Satin Slippers.

TURNING the last corner, Stewart saw his landlady standing at her door, looking anxiously up and down the street. Her face glowed with pleasure when she saw him—a pleasure so deep and genuine that the American was a little puzzled by it.

"But I am glad to see you," she cried, as he came up, her face wreathed in smiles. "I have heard rumors of horrible things. I feared I know not what! But you are safe, it seems."

"Quite safe. In fact, I was never in any danger."

"I was foolish, no doubt, to have fear; but in times like these one never knows what may happen."

"True enough," Stewart agreed; "but an American with a passport in his pocket ought to be safe anywhere."

"Ah, you have a passport—that is good! The police have been here to question you. They will return presently."

"The police?"

"There have been some spies captured, it seems, and others are trying to leave the country; so every one is suspected."

They had walked back together along the hall as they talked, and now they stopped at the foot of the stairs. The little landlady seemed very nervous—as was perhaps natural amid the alarms of war. Beads of perspiration stood out on her forehead.

"The police visited your room," she went on. "Perhaps you will find your baggage disarranged."

"So it seems they really suspect me," he asked.

"They suspect every one," the landlady repeated.

She was standing with her back toward the door, and Stewart watched why she should watch his face so closely.

Suddenly, over her shoulder, he saw the waiter with the handkerchief approaching along the hall.

"Such anxiety is quite natural," said the landlady rapidly in German, raising her voice a little. "I can understand it. But it is not remarkable that you should have missed her—the train is so irregular. I will send her to you the moment she arrives. Ah, here she is!"

"Ah, here she is!" cried a woman's voice in English—a sweet, high pitched voice, quivering with excitement. "It is I!"

The door was flung open with a crash. A woman rushed toward him, her face pale, her eyes fixed on his, her hands outstretched.

"Oh, come," he protested, "it can't be so. Let us sit down and talk this thing out quietly. Evidently there is a mistake somewhere."

"Then you did not expect me?" she demanded, mopping her eyes.

"Expect you? No—except as the fulfillment of a fairy tale."

"You do not know who I am?"

Stewart took the can that was thrust into his hand, turned back into his room, and proceeded to make a leisurely toilet. If his landlady had not told him he would never have suspected that his baggage had been searched by the police. But then he was a careless and hasty packer, by no means precise.

He had been absent turning over the contents of one of his bags, and suddenly he found himself staring at a pair of satin ball slippers, one of which was stuffed with a blue silk stocking. For quite a minute he stared, rubbing his own senses, then he picked up one of the slippers and looked at it.

It was a tiny affair, very delicate and beautiful—a real jewel in footwear. The police had searched his baggage, and he had found a pair of slippers, one of which was stuffed with a blue silk stocking. For quite a minute he stared, rubbing his own senses, then he picked up one of the slippers and looked at it.

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"I haven't the slightest idea," he said. "Nor why I am here."

"Then I am lost!" she breathed, and turned so pale that Stewart thought she was going to faint.

"Lost?" he protested. "In what way lost? What do you mean?"

By a mighty effort she fought back the faintness and regained a little of her self-control.

"At this hotel," she explained in a hoarse voice. "I was to have met a man who was to accompany me across the frontier. He has a passport for both of us—for himself and for his wife."

"You were to pass as his wife?"

"Yes."

"But you did not know the man?"

"Evidently, or I should not have been here."

She stopped, her face crimson with embarrassment.

"But how glad I am!" the woman rattled on at the top of her voice. "And what a journey! I am covered with dirt! I shall need gallons of water!"

She walked rapidly to the door, opened it and looked out. Then she closed and locked it and to his amazement caught up one of his handkerchiefs and hung it over the knob so that it masked the keyhole.

"Now we can talk," she said in a lower tone, "but we will keep to English, if you don't mind. Some one might pass. Is everything arranged? Is the passport in order?"

Her eyes were shining with excitement, her lips were trembling. As she still stood staring she came close to him and shook his arm.

"Can it be that you do not know English?" she demanded. "But that would be too stupid! You understand English, do you not?"

"At least I have always thought so."

"Then why do you not answer? Is anything wrong? You look as if you did not expect me."

"Madam," answered Stewart gravely, "will you kindly pinch me on the arm—just in the tender part? I have been told that is a test."

She snipped him with a violence that made him jump.

"Do not tell me that you are a woman," she hissed viciously. "That would be too much! Drunk at such a moment!"

But Stewart had begun to pull himself together. "No, madam, I am not drunk," he assured her; "and your pinch convinces me that I am not dreaming."

He rubbed his arm thoughtfully. "There remains only one hypothesis—that I have suddenly gone mad. And yet I have many friends of my mad."

"I am in your family for nothing," she said, "but for nothing?"

"There is, of course, another hypothesis," went on Stewart, calmly, "and that is that it is you who are mad."

"Were you not expecting me?" she repeated.

Stewart's eyes fell upon the satin slippers and he smiled.

"Why, certainly I was expecting you," he answered. "I was just saying to myself that the only thing lacking in this fairy tale was the beautiful princess—and presto! there you were."

She was looking at him wildly, with every sign of sudden terror. She caught her lower lip between her thumb and little finger of her left hand and stood a moment expectantly, holding it so and staring up at him. Then she stared back unconprehendingly, she dropped into a chair and burst into a flood of tears.

"Oh, come," he protested, "it can't be so. Let us sit down and talk this thing out quietly. Evidently there is a mistake somewhere."

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"Expect you? No—except as the fulfillment of a fairy tale."

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KEITH OF THE BORDER

By RANDALL FARRISH

"I am afraid," he said, "that you will have to wait until what it is."

"I can tell you in a word," she answered, drawing very near to him and speaking almost in a whisper. "I am a Frenchwoman."

"But surely," Stewart protested, "the Germans will not prevent your return to France? Why should they do this?"

"It is not a question of returning, but of escaping. I am an Alsatian. I was born at Strasbourg."

"And you, as an Alsatian, will assist me to escape my enemies?"

"Your enemies?"

"I will not deceive you," she said earnestly. "I trust you. I have lived all my life at Strasbourg and at Metz, fortified cities which are supposed to be impregnable, but which are not impregnable if attacked at the right point. They have their weak spot, just as every fortress has. Always, always I have kept my eyes and ears open. But by the way, I have heard what I thought a hint here, a hint there. I must get to France, my friend, and you must help me! It is not for myself I ask it, though, if I am taken, there will be no more of me. At the moment, facing a file of soldiers, I ask it for France—for your sister's repudiation!"

"I saw his resistance broke down before the girl's pleading."

"Very well," he said abruptly. "I consent."

Before he could draw back she had laid her hand on his knee before him, had caught his hand, and was covering it with tears and kisses.

"Come, come, my dear!" he said, bending over her and raising her to her feet.

She was shaken with great sobs. As she turned her streaming eyes up to him, her lips moving as if in prayer, Stewart saw how young she was, how lonely, how beautiful, how greatly in need of help, she had been fighting for her country with all her strength, with every resource, desperately, every nerve and every victory had been too much for her. But in a moment she recovered her self-control.

"There, it is over," she said, looking up at him and smiling. "But the joy of your words was almost too great. I shall not give way like that again. And I shall not try to thank you. I think you understand—I cannot thank you; there are no words great enough!"

Stewart nodded smilingly.

"Yes, I understand," he said. "We have many things to do." She went on rapidly. "First, the passport; and she caught it up from the chair on which she had laid it."

"Lost?" he protested. "In what way lost? What do you mean?"

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